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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon commented today on a draft policy paper from the Bush administration advocating that authorization for the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection project be removed from an upcoming comprehensive water projects bill. The bill, called the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007, fully authorizes the long-awaited system of levees, floodgates and locks that would protect an estimated 120,000 people and 1,700 square miles in Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes. The White House's position paper, called a Statement of Administration Policy, has not been finalized yet, but the draft clearly requests that Congress remove the Morganza project from WRDA.

Rep. Melancon said, **"Authorization for Morganza to the Gulf has already passed the House of Representatives three times. Three times! Yet the people of Terrebonne and Lafourche are still waiting for hurricane protection because of political games and bureaucratic foot-dragging. After Rep. Baker and I passed Morganza through the House at the end of the 109th Congress, a Republican Senator from Oklahoma put a procedural 'hold' on the bill, likening Morganza to 'pork barrel spending.' Now the Administration is trying to put a 'hold' of its own on the project."**

"Despite this latest hurdle, I am confident Morganza will still be included in WRDA when we vote on it in the House next week. Today I secured a commitment from House leadership that they would overlook the President's objections to Morganza and keep this vital hurricane and flood protection project in WRDA. I am pleased my leadership, and especially Chairman Jim Oberstar who drafted this bill, understands how important Morganza is to the people of south Louisiana and won't sacrifice our needs to political expediency."

"By opposing Morganza to the Gulf, the Administration is gambling with the lives and property of over one hundred thousand Louisianians, who currently have no protection from deadly hurricanes and flooding. It's time for the political games to end."

"I will continue working with the rest of the Louisiana delegation to convince the Administration of the serious need for Morganza and the hurricane protection it would provide for the people of south Louisiana. Protecting Americans from natural disasters should be a top priority for our government, and I hope the Administration realizes the need for Morganza and reverses its position on the project before Congress sends this bill to the President for his signature."

Rep. Melancon has made authorization for Morganza to the Gulf one of his top priorities in Congress. In May of 2006, when WRDA appeared to be stalled, Rep. Melancon introduced the Meeting Authorizations for our Coast (MARC) Act. Dubbed "Louisiana's WRDA," the MARC Act would have authorized Morganza to the Gulf and other vital hurricane and flood protection projects in Louisiana that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita proved were urgently needed.

In the closing hours of the 109th Congress, Rep. Melancon tried again to get authorization for Morganza, this time in a stand-alone piece of legislation he introduced with Rep. Richard Baker and Senator Mary Landrieu. While the bill quickly passed the House, it was blocked in the Senate when Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) placed a procedural "hold" on the bill, calling it "pork-barrel" spending.

Rep. Melancon again tried to secure full authorization for Morganza in January of this year, making it the first bill he introduced in the 110th Congress. Senator Landrieu introduced companion legislation in the Senate. Since then, Rep. Melancon has worked with House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar to include full authorization for Morganza in the 2007 WRDA bill, which is expected to pass the House of Representatives in the next few weeks.

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